A BRIEF STATEMENT

OF THE

DOCTRINAL POSITION OF THE MISSOURI SYNOD.

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(Translated from the German by W. H. T. D.)

The doctrine taught and professed by our Synod has been repeatedly called *new*. Such has been the experience of the fathers and founders of our Synod, and such is still our own experience at the present time. However, our doctrine is not new, neither wholly, nor in part, but is as old as the Revelation of the Holy Scriptures. Our doctrine is none other than that which God has revealed in the writings of the apostles and prophets, and which the Lutheran church in her public Confessions professes from, and in accordance with, the Scriptures. This fact is attested by every sermon which is preached on Sundays from the pulpits of our congregations. It can also be observed in our periodicals and in other publications of our Synod. Still, it may not be improper, on the occasion of the semi-centennial of our Synod, to present on the following pages a brief statement of our faith and confession, embracing the leading points of doctrine, which we profess over against ancient and modern error.

Of the Holy Scriptures.

We heartily believe that the Holy Scriptures are *the Word of God*, because the holy men of God, who wrote the Scriptures, did not write of their own accord, but only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration, as the Scriptures themselves expressly testify: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," 2 Tim. 3, 16; and again: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. 1, 21. Since the Holy Scriptures are, in all their words, the words of God, we furthermore profess that no errors or contradictions of any kind are found in them, but that they are throughout *infallible truth*, as our Lord Christ Himself testifies: "The Scriptures cannot be broken," John 10, 35. Finally, we also profess concerning these Holy Scriptures, which are the Word of God and infallible truth, that they are given by God to the Christian Church for a *foundation of faith;* for St. Paul says regarding the Christians, or the Christian Church, that they are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," Eph. 2, 20. The Scriptures are the *fountain* from which all doctrine proclaimed in the Church must be drawn; they are also the *infallible rule and norm*, by which all doctrines and teachers must be estimated and judged, according to the admonition of St. Peter: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," 1 Pet. 4, 11.

With our whole heart we reject the erroneous doctrine, which men seek to spread in the Christian Church of our day, *viz.*, that the Holy Scriptures are *not* purely the Word of God, but, in part, the Word of God, and, in part, also *the word of man*, and that, hence, they also contain errors, or, at least, are *capable* of containing them. We reject this erroneous doctrine as a very horrible one, because it contradicts Christ and the apostles to their faces, because it overthrows the foundation of faith, and because it sets up *men* as judges over the Word of *God*.

Of God.

We believe with all our hearts the sublime article of the *Holy Trinity*, *i. e.*, we believe, that there is *one* divine being, as Scripture testifies, *e. g.*, 1 Cor. 8, 4: "There is none other God but one." However, in this *one* divine being there are *three* distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as is stated in the baptismal command: "Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Matt. 28, 19. These three persons are *distinct* from one another, *i. e.*, another person is the Father, another person is the Son, another person is the Holy Ghost; but these three persons are *equal in power*, *equal in eternity*, *equal in majesty*, because each person possesses the one divine essence *entire*, as St. Paul testifies concerning the Son of God: "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," Col. 2, 9.

We profess that human reason *cannot comprehend* how there can be *one* undivided divine essence and *three* distinct persons; but we believe this to be a fact, because *Holy Scripture* so testifies.

Accordingly, we reject the error of the New Protestants, and of all Unitarians, who will not believe except in *one* person of the Godhead, inasmuch as they teach, that only the *Father* is God, while they declare the *Son* to be a mere man, albeit endowed with special gifts, and the *Holy Ghost* to be a motion created in things, *e. g.*, the spirit of virtuousness, etc. Regarding these errorists we hold that they are *outside of the pale of the Christian Church*, and have no Gospel, no baptism, etc., as Scripture testifies, 1 John 2, 23: "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." In the second place, we also reject the error of old and new teachers who, while applying the name of God to the Son, still represent Him as being *inferior* to the Father according to His divine nature. Of these errorists we hold that they deny the *one* divine essence, and are striving to introduce pagan *polytheism* into Christianity.

Of Creation.

We believe that God has created heaven and earth and all their host, and that *in the manner and in the time* recounted in the Holy Scriptures, especially Gen. 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine by which the work of creation, as revealed in Scripture, is denied or limited, as is done, *e. g.*, when in our days it is assumed, ostensibly in deference to "science," that the world has, in immense periods of time, more or less developed out of itself.

Of Sin.

We believe that God created the first men according to His image, *i. e.*, in perfect righteousness and holiness, but that by the fall of the first men not only they themselves, but also all their natural offspring, have come under the wrath of God, and have lost their original righteousness and holiness. Accordingly, we believe that after the fall of the first men all men are sinners already *by birth*, *i. e.*, that they enter this world with a nature wholly corrupt by sin, void of all fear of God, but having the lust of every sin dwelling in them, as Scripture testifies, Gen. 8, 21: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." We also believe, despite all contradiction of blind human reason, that this inborn sin, or original sin, is *truly sin*, *i. e.*, that it subjects men to the wrath of God and to eternal damnation, as Scripture again testifies Eph. 2, 3: "We were by nature the children of wrath." Finally, we also believe that all men do not rise above their sinful nature, not even by the "progress and culture" of our times, but with all their efforts they *remain*, on their part, *sinners* in the sight of God, subject to the wrath of God and to eternal damnation, as it is written: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," John 3, 6. And again, Rom. 8, 7. 8: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to

the Law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

We reject all doctrines which come into conflict with the doctrine here professed, to-wit, firstly, the error of all ancient and modern errorists, who imagine that man's inborn evil condition is not accounted sin by God, and who, accordingly, also imagine that infants are not in need of the remission of sins and of baptism. We reject, secondly, the false doctrine that man is by nature good, or only partially corrupt, and that, hence, by doing all in his power he can obtain grace from God, or render himself a somewhat worthy recipient of the same. All these errors we reject, because they contradict Scripture, because they deceive men regarding their condition, and because they are a reproach to Christ, who by *His* fulfillment of the Law and by *His* suffering and death has redeemed men from sin, from the wrath of God, and from eternal damnation.

Of Redemption.

We believe that the second person of the Godhead, *i. e.*, the Son of God, *was made man*, and this in the following manner, *viz.*, that in the fullness of time He received into His divine person a true human nature from the Virgin Mary by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Accordingly, we believe, regarding Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, that He is "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary," *true God and true man in one undivided and indivisible person*. This miracle of the incarnation of the Son of God has taken place to the end that He should become the Mediator between God and man, namely, that *in the place of mankind* He should fulfill the Law, suffer and die, and thus reconcile all mankind with God, and bring them again unto life. All of which is testified by the Holy Ghost through St. Paul, who says: "When the fullness of

the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. 4, 4. 5.

We reject all errors opposed to this truth. In particular, we repudiate the gross error of certain modern teachers who are not afraid to reiterate the blasphemy of ancient enemies of the Christian Church, to the effect, that Christ was not born of the Virgin Mary by the operation of the Holy Ghost, but that He is the natural son of Joseph. We also renounce the doctrine of the New Protestants, and of all Unitarians, who regard Christ as a mere man, and who represent salvation to consist in this, that Christ has by His virtuous life shown men how *by their own virtue* they might attain to heaven. We, furthermore, renounce all errors by which the person and the work of Christ are *divided*, as is done, *e. g.*, by the teaching, that it was the human nature alone, and not the Son of God, which truly suffered, or by the assertion, that after His ascension Christ is present with His Church on earth only according to His divine, but not according to His human nature. On the contrary, we maintain this comforting Scripture ground, that the Son of God, in and with His adopted human nature, did truly suffer for the liquidation of the sins of the whole world, inasmuch as Scripture testifies that *the Lord of glory* has been crucified, 1 Cor. 2, 8, and that the blood of Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*, cleanses us from all sin, 1 John 1, 8. We also believe that Christ, after His exaltation to the right hand of God, can be, and in reality is, present here on earth, not only according to His divine nature, but also according to His human nature, according to which He is our brother, as Scripture testifies: "He ascended up far above all heavens, *that He might fill all things*," Eph. 4, 10, and as Christ Himself, prior to His ascension, has promised: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," Matt. 28, 20.

Of Faith in Christ.

Since Christ by His vicarious life, suffering, and death is the *sole* Redeemer of men, and since God has the salvation, which was wrought out by Christ, proclaimed to men through the Gospel, to the end that they may *believe* this salvation, and thus become sharers therein, we profess that *faith in Christ* is the only way for men to obtain salvation, as Christ Himself testifies: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John 3, 36.

However, by faith in Christ we understand faith in *the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake*, *i. e.*, this confidence of the heart, that God by grace, for Christ's sake, without our works, forgives all our sins, and receives us to everlasting life. We reject the doctrine, which in our time is widely disseminated, especially among the sects in our country, and according to which faith in Christ is not understood to be faith in the *Gospel*, *i. e.*, in the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, but human efforts to fulfill the *Law* of God.

Of Conversion.

Faith in Christ, by which alone men are saved, is not by nature found in man, but is wrought in man by conversion.

Regarding conversion, we believe that it is neither wholly, nor one half, nor one thousandth part, the work of man, but *the work of God alone*, who by grace for Christ's sake works the same in man by His Word. We believe thus, because it is the plain doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. Scripture, namely, states, in the first place, regarding unconverted man, that he is *dead* in sins, Eph. 2, 1, and that he does not advance toward salvation in Christ, but regards it as foolishness, 1 Cor. 2, 14. In the second place, Scripture *explicitly* declares conversion to be the work of God alone, yea, to be an operation of divine omnipotence. Eph. 2, 4. 5: "*God*, who is rich in mercy, for His great love

wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Eph. 1, 19. 20: "We believe, *according to the working of His mighty power*, which He wrought in Christ, *when He raised Him from the dead*."

We, furthermore, profess that the Holy Spirit is willing to work conversion not only in a few, but *in all hearers* of the Word, and that, if a part of the hearers, nevertheless, remain unconverted, this *is due not to a deficiency in the grace of God*, but must be ascribed solely to the obstinate resistance of man, as Christ says of unbelieving Jerusalem: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not*," Matt. 23, 37, and as Stephen says of the unbelieving Jews: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do *always resist* the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye," Acts 7, 51. Grace, although it is seriously intended, yea, although it is an almighty grace, Eph. 1, 19. 20, can nevertheless be *resisted* on the part of man. Man cannot *promote* his conversion, but he can *hinder* it.

Since the question has been frequently raised in the Christian Church, especially in our day, *What is the cause* why not all men are converted, seeing that the grace of God is universal, and that all men are alike found in a state of utter depravity? we profess that on Scriptural ground we know only this much, that it is due to the grace of God, and to it alone, if men are *converted*, while it is due to men, and to them alone, and is not due to a defect in grace, if men are *not converted*, as is written Hos. 13, 9: "O Israel, *thou* hast destroyed thyself; but in *me* is thine help." Here we rest the matter, since Scripture has revealed nothing further.

We reject with all our heart every kind of *synergism*, *i. e.*, every doctrine which teaches that conversion is not wrought *by the grace of God alone*, but in part, or "in a

certain respect," also by man himself, or that it is effected by man's good "conduct." We reject this doctrine, because it contradicts Scripture, because it makes man, in part at least, his own Savior, and because it thus overthrows the chief article of our religion which teaches that we are saved by grace alone for Christ's sake. — We also reject every kind of *Calvinism*, *i. e.*, every doctrine which teaches that God would seriously convert *not all hearers of the Word*, but only a part of them. We reject this doctrine, because it also contradicts Scripture, and leads to despair. — Accordingly, we reject both the Calvinistic answer to the question why not all men are converted, *viz.*, that the grace of God is not universal nor seriously intended; and the synergistic answer to the same question, *viz.*, that conversion and salvation do not solely depend on the grace of God, but also on the good conduct of man. We reject both answers, because they contradict Scripture. In answering questions we do not proceed further than Scripture leads us, and Scripture teaches that whoever is converted is converted solely by the grace of God, and whoever remains unconverted must ascribe this fact to the resistance which he has offered to the gracious operations of the Holy Ghost.

Of Justification.

All its teachings regarding the love of God to a sinner-world, regarding the salvation wrought out by Christ, regarding the insufficiency of all men to acquire salvation through themselves, and regarding faith in Christ as the only way to obtain salvation, the Scripture sums up in the article of *justification*, by which it teaches the reason why, and the manner in which, a person is accounted righteous before God, and received unto eternal life. Holy Scripture, namely, teaches that God does not receive men on a basis of their own work and their own merit, as the blind world and nominal Christians imagine Him to do, but that without

the deeds of the Law, alone by grace, on account of the perfect merit of Christ, He justifies them, *i. e.*, He *regards* as righteous all those who *believe* in Christ, *i. e.*, who believe on the authority of the Gospel, *that for Christ's sake their sins are forgiven them*. Thus the Holy Spirit testifies through St. Paul: "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. 3, 22—24. And again: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law," Rom. 3, 28.

This doctrine we believe with all our heart, and pray God to graciously preserve us and our posterity in the same. For only by this doctrine Christ is given the *honor* due Him, *viz.*, that by His life, suffering, and death He is our only Redeemer, and only by this doctrine poor sinners receive this abiding *comfort*, that God is assuredly gracious to them. Regarding this doctrine we hold, in harmony with our fathers, that it is "the *principal article* of the Christian doctrine;" this doctrine is the real secret of Scripture, by which Scripture is distinguished from all false books of religion; for only Scripture teaches this article, that men are saved by faith in Christ crucified, and not by their own works. We also profess that only where *this* article has entered into a heart by faith there are Christians, and there is the Christian Church found, while all men who do not believe this article must be numbered with the unbelieving, even though they are found in external communion with the Church.

Accordingly, we also profess that the Christians of all times must exercise holy zeal and the greatest care to have this article taught *with perfect purity*, *i. e.*, to have *all works of men*, by whatever name they may be called, excluded from the same. We do not only reject the well-known gross error of the merit of works, which the sect of the Papists teaches, and the equally gross error, which cer-

tain so-called Protestants teach, who state that God receives a person unto grace if he strives after virtue, as far as he is able; but we also reject all modern doctrines, by which the *renewal* and *sanctification* of men, designated as "ethical conception of faith," or "inwardness of the Christian belief," is made a cause of justification alongside of the grace of God and the merit of Christ. For, while it is true that faith, whenever it enters a heart, effects also an inward renewal and sanctification, and brings forth good morals and good works, still it is not through these features that faith *justifies* in the sight of God, but *solely through the act of believing and accepting the merit of Christ from the Word of the Gospel.*

Finally, we declare that by every kind of synergism, *i. e.*, that by every doctrine which ascribes to man a cooperation unto conversion or unto the acquisition of faith, the article of justification is corrupted. For even if people rightly say, in harmony with the Church, that man is justified without works "by faith," or even "by faith alone," still by their false doctrine of conversion they have made faith itself, in part, a work of man, and thus they have again introduced man's work into the article of justification.

We reject *as fundamental corruptions of the Christian faith* all heresies by which man's own works, and his own merit, is mingled into the article of justification. For the Christian faith is none other than this, that we obtain the forgiveness of sins and salvation, without our works, alone by grace for Christ's sake, through faith.

Of Good Works.

Regarding good works we hold that only those works are good which a person performs *to the end of serving and honoring God* according to the rule of the divine Law. The statement not unfrequently heard among Christians of our day, that the *motive* from which a work is performed might be left out of the account, if only the work itself is performed, —this statement we regard as heathenish blindness.

Such works, however, as are performed *in the service and honor of God* no man performs unless he *first believes* that God has received him to eternal life by grace for Christ's sake, without all works of his own, as is written: "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin," Rom. 14, 2. Accordingly, we reject as a great folly the modern assertion, that among Christians works must be *placed in the fore*, and faith must *step to the rear*. Good works *never* precede faith, but always *follow* after, and proceed from the same.

Regarding all works which are performed with a view *to first acquire* the grace of God and salvation, we declare, that they bring upon the doers thereof not the grace of God and salvation, but the wrath of God and eternal damnation, as is written Gal. 3, 10: "As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse." However, all works which *follow* after and *proceed from* faith, *i. e.*, which flow from gratitude on account of the grace which a person has experienced in Christ, while they do not merit salvation, still are crowned by God in the life everlasting with a glorious *reward of grace*, as St. Paul testifies 2 Cor. 9, 6: "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." Accordingly, we hold that there is a constant necessity among Christians of diligent admonition to good works, by reminding them of the mercy of God in Christ, after the example of St. Paul, Rom. 12, 1: "I beseech you, brethren, *by the mercies of God*, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." However, we reject as unchristian and foolish all attempts at producing good works by the threats and the compulsion of the Law, or by carnal motives.

Since, also, in our time the notion prevails, not only among Papists, but also among Protestants, that a person can serve God by *self-elected* works, *i. e.*, by works which God has not commanded, such as forbidden meats, and ordinances pertaining to the Sabbath, we profess, that, in the same manner as all works must flow from faith in Christ,

so they must also be performed according to the rule of the divine command. With Luther we call that a truly holy life when Christians *believingly* perform the works of their common Christian calling, such as patience under the cross, forgiving one's enemies, etc., and the works of the special estates ordained by God for this present life, such as the works of parents, children, servants, teachers, rulers, and subjects.

Of the Means of Grace.

Although the whole earth is full of the temporal bounties and blessings of God, and although God *is present* and *operates* everywhere throughout creation, as is written: "By Him all things consist," Col. 1, 17, and: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being," Acts 17, 28, still we believe that God does not offer and communicate the *spiritual blessings* purchased by Christ, such as the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, etc., except through *the means of grace* ordained by Him.

These means of grace are the Word of the Gospel, and the sacraments of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper. The Gospel, according to the Scriptures, is the word of the *grace of God*, Acts 20, 24. 32; it *ministereth the Spirit*, Gal. 3, 5; Baptism is applied "*for the remission of sins*," Acts 2, 38, and is the *washing of regeneration*, Tit. 3, 5; and that the object of the Lord's Supper, *i. e.*, of the ministration of the body and blood of Christ, can be none other than the communication and sealing of *the forgiveness of sins*, is testified by these words: "Given for you," and, "Shed for you," "for the remission of sins," Luke 22, 19. 20. Matt. 26, 28.

Accordingly, we profess, in the first place, that there is no other way for the Church to gain souls, and to preserve them in the Church, than *the use of the means of grace ordained by God*. All *other* means for building the Church, *i. e.*, all means which do not consist in, nor conduce to, the use of the Word of God, we reject as "new

measures,'' by which the Church is not built, but harmed. Accordingly, we profess, in the second place, that all men who by the Law have come to a knowledge of their sins, and are inquiring how they may obtain grace, and become certain of the same, *must be directed to the Gospel and the Sacraments*. For by these means of grace, not by the Law, or by the sensations of their hearts, etc., all men can and shall know, and that *infallibly*, how God in His heart regards them, namely, that for Christ's sake He is gracious to them, and willing to forgive their sins. For as Christ has obtained grace for all men without distinction, so He likewise offers the grace obtained by Him to all men without distinction through the means of grace appointed by Him, and bids them accept the proffered grace by faith, which faith He purposes to enkindle and to strengthen in them through these selfsame means of grace.

We reject the doctrine of the sects, that the grace and Spirit of God are communicated not *by means of* the Word and Sacraments, but by an *immediate* and secret operation. By this erroneous doctrine faith is robbed of its God-given foundation, and degenerates into enthusiasm; at the same time grace itself is denied and rendered uncertain. We also reject the doctrine of the Papists, that the mere outward use of the means of grace *without faith* makes a person a partaker of grace. For as earnestly as we hold that grace is conveyed and offered to all men who use the means of grace, so earnestly we also hold that only those become partakers of grace who *believe*, as the words and promises declare. We also know that by the methods both of enthusiasts and of Romanists the cardinal doctrine of the Christian religion is denied, *viz.*, that we are saved by grace for Christ's sake, and not by our own works. For a person who refuses to believingly receive the forgiveness of sins out of the word of the Gospel and out of the Sacraments is seeking it in himself, and purposes to base it upon his renewal and sanctification, that is, upon his own worthiness, hence,

not upon the merit of Christ alone. Again, a person who imagines that he is become a child of God by the mere external use of the means of grace, without faith, puts his trust not in the merit of Christ, but in the works pertaining to his external relation with the Church.

We profess that all means of grace convey *the same* grace, and that they convey it *entire*. The Word of the Gospel gives the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation; the same is done by Holy Baptism and by the Holy Supper, as is shown by the passages of Scripture cited above. The difference is only this, that the forgiveness of sins, which is fully and entirely given already by the Word of the Gospel, is appropriated and sealed *severally to individuals* for a great comfort of their consciences, in Baptism "with the washing of water by the Word," and in the Holy Supper by the wonderful gift of the body and blood of Christ. The question: "Why must the same grace be offered and sealed in *several* ways?" we answer from our Confessions, with gratitude towards God, as follows: "The Gospel affords us more than one means, one counsel and assistance, in opposition to sin; *for God is superabundantly rich in His grace.*"

In addition, we profess, as regards Baptism in particular, that it is right *to baptize also infants*, because Christ has commanded little children to be brought to Him, Mark 10, 14, and St. Paul teaches, Col. 2, 11. 12, that Baptism in the New Testament has taken the place of circumcision in the Old Testament; and, finally, because in His *general* command of baptism, Matt. 28, 19, Christ does not expressly except children, hence, includes them. We also believe that by Baptism, which is a washing of regeneration, Tit. 3, 5, children obtain faith, and through faith receive in Baptism forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

We reject the delusion of the Baptists, who teach that children must not be baptized, and who also contend that children are not capable of faith, contrary to the words of

Christ, who expressly affirms of children, that they have *faith*, Matt. 18, 6, and that theirs is the fruit of faith, the *kingdom of heaven*, Mark 10, 14.

Of the Election of Grace.

We heartily believe that there is an *election of grace*, or an election *to life everlasting*. Holy Writ reveals that all those who for Christ's sake, by the grace of God, through the means of grace, obtain faith, are justified, sanctified, and preserved in faith *here in time*,—that all these have already had these spiritual blessings accorded them by God *from eternity*, and this for the same reason, and in the same manner, namely, by grace alone for Christ's sake, and according to the order of the means of grace. For thus Scripture testifies, Eph. 1, 3—5: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: *according as He hath chosen us in Him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." And again, Acts 13, 48: "And as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed." And again, Rom. 8, 29. 30: "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.... Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

Accordingly, we reject, as an erroneous doctrine hostile to Scripture, the teaching, that not the grace of God alone and the merit of Christ are the cause of the election of grace, but that God has found, or seen, also *in us* something good which prompted or caused Him to elect us, no matter whether this merit be called "good works," "good conduct," or by any other name. For thus the Holy Spirit testifies through St. Paul, 2 Tim. 1, 9: "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, *not according to our*

works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.''

Nor does Holy Scripture teach that God has in election regarded the *faith* of the elect, or that He has elected ''in view of faith,'' in such a manner, that the faith of the elect was already in them *before* their election, but according to Scripture faith belongs to the spiritual blessings which God has accorded us by His eternal election. Thus Scripture teaches, Acts 13, 48: ''And as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed,'' and thus the Confession of our church on Scriptural ground testifies concerning the eternal election of God: ''Through His gracious will and good pleasure in Christ Jesus it is also a *cause* which procures, works, facilitates, and promotes our salvation and whatever pertains to it; and upon this our salvation is so firmly grounded that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,' Matt. 16, 18. For it is written: 'Neither shall any pluck my sheep out of my hand,' John 10, 28. And again, Acts 13, 48: '*And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed*.'''

As earnestly as we maintain that there is an election of *grace*, or a predestination *to salvation*, so decidedly we teach, on the other hand, that there is no election of *wrath*, or, which amounts to the same, a predestination *to damnation*. As God's love to a sinner-world is universal, and as Christ has perfectly redeemed all men, so God is willing to bring all men without distinction unto faith, to preserve them therein, and thus to save them; as Scripture testifies, 1 Tim. 2, 4: ''God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.'' No man is lost because God had predestinated him to eternal damnation, but only those are lost who judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life, *i. e.*, who put the Word of the Gospel from them, and obstinately resist the earnest operation of the Holy Spirit.

We reject every doctrine which teaches that God does not earnestly desire all men to be saved, but has

from the beginning created a part of them to damnation, or that He passes some men by with His converting grace. We also reject the distinction that is made between a *weak* universal grace and a *strong* converting grace, the former of which is said to refer to all men, while the latter is said to refer only to the elect; on the contrary, we hold that the grace which is accorded those who are lost is, as regards its virtue and intention, a converting grace, Acts 13, 46; 7, 51. Matt. 23, 37.

Of the Church.

We believe one holy Christian Church on earth, the one Head of which is Christ, and which is gathered, preserved, and governed by Christ through His Word.

The members of this Church are *those* men, and *only* those men, who by the operation of the Holy Ghost *believe in Christ*, *i. e.*, who believe that God has forgiven their sins for Christ's sake. Or to express it more briefly, *the Christians* are the Church. It is self-evident that outside of this Church, which is the aggregate of the believers, there is *no salvation*, because Christ says: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him." It is equally self-evident that this Church is, to men, *invisible*, because the faith of the heart, which alone makes a person a member of the Church, can be seen only by God, the Searcher of hearts, as is written: "The Lord knoweth them that are His," 2 Tim. 2, 19.

Regarding this Church, which is the communion of all believers, and outside of which there is no salvation, we hold that it is found not only in those external church communities which rightly and purely teach the Gospel *in every part*, but also in such organizations where, alongside with error, so much of the Gospel is still preserved as to enable souls to obtain faith. Accordingly, we reject the teaching, that only in the orthodox Lutheran church chil-

dren of God are found; on the contrary, we profess that the Church exists throughout the whole world in all places where there are *believing souls*, which may also be the case in places where errorists have obtained the rule, as God says concerning Israel, at a time when the priests of Baal were ruling: "I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal," 1 Kings 19, 18.

Although, by the great mercy of God, there are found children of God also in the church communities of errorists, still such church organizations of errorists do not exist by the will of God, but are earnestly *prohibited*, since God desires to have His Word, in every particular, both preached and believed with purity, as is written 1 Pet. 4, 11: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Hence, it is the will of God, that Christians should affiliate only with orthodox church organizations, and that Christians who have strayed into heterodox church organizations should *leave* the same, and seek the communion of the orthodox Church, as is written Rom. 16, 17: "I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and *avoid them*." Accordingly, we reject the *unionistic practice* prevalent especially in our time, that is, the rather unchurchly practice of churches, which make it a duty of Christians not to separate from false teachers, but to *remain* with them. We reject unionism as disobedience to the express command of Christ, as the real cause of the origin and continuance of divisions in the Church, and as a standing danger, threatening the *entire* loss of the Word of God.

Since, curiously enough, there has been, and still is, a controversy in the Church as to *who possesses* the spiritual power which Christ has given to His Church on earth, such as the power to call and to send out preachers, to excommunicate impenitent sinners, to absolve the penitent, to order affairs in the Church which Christ has not commanded, etc., we profess that all spiritual power which

Christ has given to His Church is held by those who are the Church, namely, by the *Christians*, or the *believers*. For just as the believers are justified and become the children of God by faith, just so do they possess, by the same faith, all spiritual blessings and rights which Christ has purchased for His Church. Of this fact St. Paul reminds the believers, saying: "All things are yours," 1 Cor. 3, 21., and thus Christ Himself appropriates *to all believers* the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 16, 13—19; 18, 17—20. John 20, 22. 23, and commissions *all believers* to preach the Gospel, Matt. 28, 19. 20. Accordingly, we reject all doctrines by which this spiritual power, or any part thereof, is ascribed as belonging *originally* to individual persons, such as the Pope, or the bishops, or to the order of the ministry, or to secular princes, or to councils and synods, etc. We also believe that Christians should with great diligence guard their spiritual rights, chiefly for this reason, that they may not become the servants of men, but may acknowledge Christ alone as their Lord, 1 Cor. 7, 23, and furthermore for this reason, that they may not be slothful in the discharge of their spiritual duties which are connected with their spiritual rights.

Inasmuch as also this question has been controverted, *how many* Christians, or *what part* of the Church possessed the spiritual power described above, we profess that a congregation at *any place*, or, any *local* congregation, has all spiritual power; for it is the local congregation which our Lord Christ in Matt. 18, 17. 18 names as the congregation, or church, in which He has vested the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and, hence, all spiritual power, saying: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We also observe in the New Testament that in the apostolic Church *local congregations*, prompted by the apostles, elect pastors, Acts 14, 23, and other officers of the Church, Acts 6, 5, also that they are ordered to exclude impenitent sinners, 1 Cor. 5, 13, and to

absolve the penitent, 2 Cor. 2, 6 ff., to inspect the proper administration of the ministerial office, Col. 4, 17, etc. Accordingly, we reject all doctrines by which the power of the Church is conceded only to the church of an entire country, or to an entire synod, or even to the Church universal only, and by which, consequently, the *subjection by divine right* of a local congregation to a greater church organization is taught. This is no small error, but it is the antichristian error upon which popery has been founded. Over against this error we maintain that all greater church organizations, such as synods, churches embracing an entire country, councils, etc., only sustain the relation of *advisers* to the local congregation, and have only so much power as the local congregation has conferred upon them. We also profess, that, while the union of local congregations into *synods*, or other church organizations of greater dimensions, is a highly beneficial institution, still it is not commanded by God, but is an *institution of the Church*. For as the office of the ministry is the only *divinely* appointed office within the Church, so the congregation, which at any place gathers around this office of the ministry, is the only external community *of divine appointment*. All other offices and external unions within the Church are not of divine appointment, but are ordinances of the Church, and must be so ordered and conducted as to be *subservient* to the office of public preaching and to the local congregation. Accordingly, we also reject and combat every kind of "church societies" in our day by which the congregational bonds which God has ordained are dissolved, or the activity of the congregation is hindered, and we approve and aid only such societies as become subordinate and subservient to the congregation.

Of the Ministry.

Regarding the office of the ministry we teach that it is a *divine* ordinance, *i. e.*, the Christians at a certain place are enjoined by divine precept to put to use the Word of

God not only privately and within the circle of their families, but it is their duty also to have the Word preached among them *publicly* by persons qualified for such work, and to have the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, Matt. 28, 18—20. Acts 14, 23. 2 Tim. 2, 3.

However, the office of the ministry possesses no other power than the power *of the Word*, 1 Pet. 4, 11, *i. e.*, it is the duty of Christians to yield an unconditional obedience to the office of the ministry, whenever and wherever the minister proclaims to them the Word of God, Hebr. 13, 17. Luke 10, 16; on the other hand, if the minister in his teachings and injunctions goes beyond the Word of God, it would not be the duty of Christians to obey, but to disobey him, so as to remain faithful to Christ, in accordance with the word of Christ: "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren," Matt. 23, 8. Accordingly, we reject with all our heart the erroneous doctrine by which the office of the ministry is given the power to impose a yoke upon the neck of the disciples in matters which Christ has not commanded.

We also profess that the right *to judge in matters of doctrine* does not only belong to pastors, synods, councils, etc., but to all believers, because all believers are commanded to avoid false teachers, a warning which Christ inculcates on all children of God, saying: "Beware of false prophets," Matt. 7, 15. Any person who infringes the right of Christians to judge in matters of doctrine gives the Christians over into the power of men, and makes them subject, as regards their faith, to men, instead of subjecting them to God alone. From the right, however, of Christians to decide doctrinal matters results the *duty* to diligently study the Word of God, so as to be able to discharge this important office. For they are to decide doctrines not according to their own notions, but according to what is written. Christians *shall* and *may* decide doctrine *in accordance with the Word of God.*

Of the Millennium.

We believe that the Church of God here on earth will unto the last day *be subject to the cross*, and the more so the nearer the last day approaches, as the Holy Ghost by St. Paul testifies to all Christians, that they must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God, Acts 14, 22. We reject the doctrine, that the Church may expect here on earth a future glorious estate in a reign of a thousand years, because this doctrine contradicts clear passages of Scripture, and misleads Christians to direct their hope to an imaginary happiness here on earth, instead of directing it alone to the happiness in heaven.

Of the Antichrist.

As regards *the great Antichrist*, we do not believe that he is yet to come, but hold that he has appeared in the Roman Papacy, because the abominations which have been predicted in Scripture, especially in 2 Thess. 2, regarding the Antichrist agree with the kingdom of the Pope and his members. For we behold the Pope, under the name and title of an infallible Vicegerent of Christ on earth, continually leading men away from the *Word* and *merit* of Christ, and, instead thereof, leading them to his own papal word and to the righteousness of human works, and, hence, hurrying them into eternal damnation; and we behold him doing all this *under the enticing appearance of external church forms and great sanctity* and appealing to all manner of lying powers, signs, and wonders. Accordingly, we recognize in Popery that greatest enemy of the Christian Church predicted in 2 Thess. 2, and we hold that those err, and cannot rightly warn souls against the seducing power of Popery, who expect the great Antichrist, or the full manifestation thereof, to be an event of the future.

Although both Church and State are ordinances of *God*, they must not be mingled into one another. Church and State have entirely different *aims*. By the Church God purposes to *save* men, whence the Church is called the "mother" of believers, Gal. 4, 26. By the State God purposes to maintain *external order* among men, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," 1 Tim. 2, 2. In like manner, the *means* which Church and State employ to gain their ends are entirely different. The Church may not employ any other means than *the preaching of the Word of God;* she detests, in particular, all external force and coercion, in accordance with the saying of Christ to Peter, when the latter had drawn the sword: "Put up thy sword into the sheath," John 18, 11, and to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence," John 18, 36. On the other hand, the State makes laws bearing on civil life, and rightly employs for their execution also *the sword and other corporal punishments*, as is written Rom. 13, 4: "He," *i. e.*, the government, "beareth not the sword in vain."

Accordingly, we reject with all our heart the practice of those who desire to see the power of the State employed "in the interest of the Church," and who thus make the Church a secular kingdom, to the great detriment of the Church. We likewise reject the foolish attempts of those who would make the State a church, by striving to govern the State by the Word of God, instead of ruling it by external, civil laws, when it is known that only Christians can be governed by the Word of God.